

# The New Amberola GRAPHIC



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# The New Amberola Graphic

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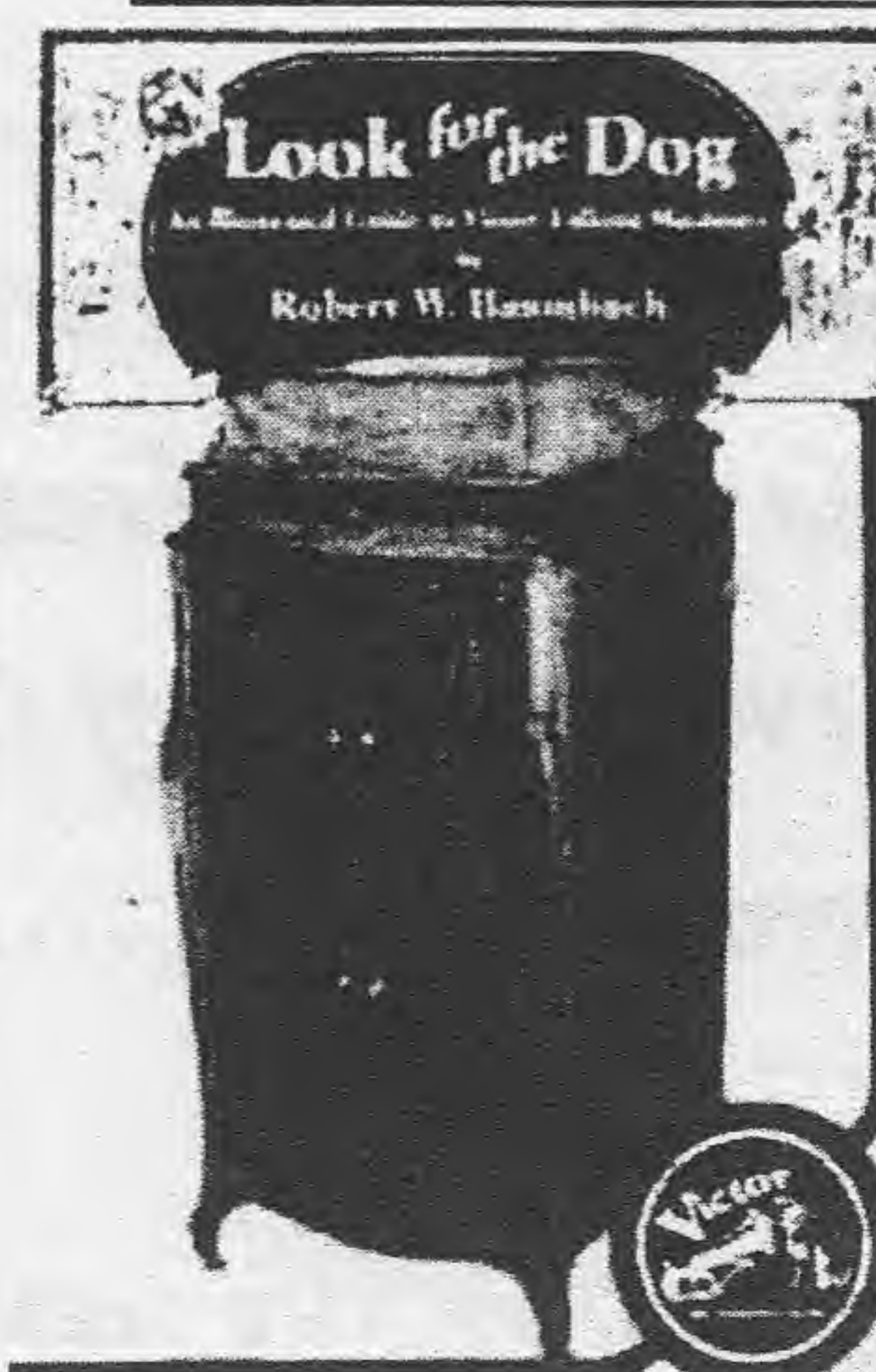
## Editor's Notes

As the year ends, it's time to again thank our subscribers and customers for their support and *patience!* Our New Year's Resolution is to get caught up on back orders and to try to publish more frequently.

What was supposed to be a state-of-the art computer when we bought it five years ago has died, locking up dozens of articles, files, etc. My 1904 Victor MS is still playing just fine, the 1915 Hotpoint *El Tosto* still makes dandy toast, and the 1951 Packard purrs like a kitten. So why do we just assume that modern electronic equipment is expected to have only temporary usefulness?

Best wishes for the holidays and the coming year.

--M.F.B.



## Look for the Dog - An Illustrated History to Victor Talking Machines

Illustrations of every Victor machine, 1901-1929. Production dates and quantities; company history; service And repair instructions, etc. 335 pages, soft cover. Published at \$19.95. Our Price: \$17.95 + 1.80 shipping.

Did you get a Victrola for Christmas?

New Amberola Phonograph Co.

Significant anniversaries abound in any calendar year, and 2003 is no exception. We mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of flight in December. Earlier in the year we noted the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first successful coast-to-coast automobile trip, which was documented by Ken Burns in a two-hour PBS broadcast entitled “Horatio’s Drive.”

(This noteworthy event was accomplished by a Vermonter named Horatio Jackson.) And in November, CBS celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a big three-hour extravaganza from the Manhattan Center in New York City.

But was it truly their 75<sup>th</sup>? Columbia record supplements from the fall of **1927** announce the launching of the Columbia Broadcasting System, suggesting that 2003 is actually CBS's seventy-

## “The Pick of the Air”

WOR	Bamberger & Company, Newark
WEAN	Shepard Stores, Providence
WNAC	Shepard Stores, Boston
WFBL	Onondaga Hotel, Syracuse
WMAK	Norton Laboratories, Inc., Lockport (Buffalo)
WCAU	Universal Broadcasting Co., Philadelphia
WJAS	Pickering Store, Gazette-Times, Chronicle-Telegram, Pittsburgh
WADC	Allen Theatre, Beacon Journal, Times-Press, Akron
WAIU	American Insurance Union, Columbus
WKRC	Kodol Radio Corporation, Cincinnati
WGHP	George H. Phelps, Inc., Detroit
WMAQ	Chicago Daily News, Chicago
KMOX	(The Voice of St. Louis) Globe-Democrat, St. Louis
WCAO	Monumental Radio Co., Baltimore
KOIL	Mona Motor Oil Company, Council Bluffs
WOWO	Main Auto & Supply Co., Fort Wayne

## Listen for Columbia's "Magic Notes"

**-FOR SALE BY-**



**sixth** anniversary! Purists would note that CBS magnate William Paley acquired the United Independent Broadcasters (which was apparently originally operated by Columbia) late in 1928; but this is not the true birth of “CBS,” as evidenced by the Columbia brochures of 1927. The attractive fall covers, incidentally, may have come from the pen of noted sheet music artist, Albert W. Barbelle.

*"like life itself"*



Although Columbia had abandoned radio broadcasting, they continued to offer radio sets under their name.

# "As Easy as Telephoning"

## A Glimpse at Columbia "Personal" Recordings

By Martin F. Bryan

### Part II

#### The "P" Series

In January of 1924, Columbia abandoned most or all of their catalogue series, many of which had been in place since their introduction of "Double Disc" records in 1908. Gone was the familiar "A" series, which reached A4000 the month before with a pair of blues songs by Clara Smith. Gone, too, were new issues of single-sided "Symphony Series" discs. The last three issues in the old format were #80604 (an aria from "Mefistofele" by Charles Hackett), #80817 (Pablo Casals on 'cello) and #81055 (a Wieniawski violin piece by Duci de Kerekjarto). Also gone was the now-familiar blue label Columbia as well as the impressive "tri-color" label design, which actually had its origins even before 1908. Truly, the end of an era had come, as was evidenced not only by the abandonment of familiar series and labels, but also by a recent bankruptcy.

Evidently it was reasoned that 1924 was a time for change and for bringing a new line before the public. Most notable was the label design. Beginning with the January, 1924 issues, all new domestic records bore a striking metallic-colored base. Obviously thinking in terms of precious metals, the popular series was given copper, the somewhat "better" class of music was given silver, while the premier recordings were given gold. The title area was flanked on either side by an unfurled banner of orange, white and blue.

The new series were also assigned new catalogue designations. By the end of the year there were no less than fifteen new numerical blocks, but all were suffixed by the letter "D" (presumably to indicate "Domestic"). I assume that the "F" series ("Foreign"), and I know for certain that the "X" series ("Export"?), were also introduced in 1924. One very popular issue of 1924 was a sample record which promoted the new "silent surface" Columbia press-



(Above: the new label design for 1924)

ings. This was given the "S" prefix, and since one side was a dance medley by Ted Lewis, while the reverse contained classical artists, it had a copper label on one side and a gold on the other. The "M" suffix ("Masterworks") didn't appear until 1926.

Many of the old "A" series records, which must have had limited press runs in 1923 due to financial restraints, were given the new style label when repressings were required. But here is something which has just now occurred to me. Although most of the former single-sided classical records had been paired up in the new format, a very small handful of one-sided discs remained in the catalogue throughout 1924. Some of these were "orphans" -- i.e., a single 10" disc and a single 12" disc, both by the same artist, which could not be mated. If these records had to be repressed during the year, what labels did they receive? The old tri-color or the new banner style? Has anyone a one-sided Columbia in his collection (artists such as Ponselle, Hackett, Kerekjarto, Stracciari, Seidel, as well as others) bearing the newer banner label? If so, it is surely as uncommon as a blue label Victor bearing a scroll

label!

While this is all getting further from the topic of this article...namely, the Columbia Personal Series ...it does set the stage for the new generation of Personal Recordings.

Appropriately, Columbia assigned the "P" suffix to a new series of Personal Recordings, initially whether one or two-sided. The series of ten-inch discs ran into 1930, with just under 150 issues. The label design, as was previewed in the first installment, is a simpler rendering of the "D" series banner label; matrix numbers continued in the 91000 block.

Actually, while the new "D" series was scheduled for January 1924 releases, Columbia evidently anticipated the change a month or more earlier, as at least one early issue in the "P" series was released for Christmas, 1923! This was 3-P for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.

President Haley Fiske gives a short Christmas greeting to his agents, opening with "To my dear children in the field..." Such a greeting would surely be considered patronizing and laughable some eighty years later, but Fiske sounds genuinely sincere. The reverse, at first glance, looks mundane: it is yet another version of "Silent Night," this time sung by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. Glee Club. One might suspect a Shannon Quartet knock-off, but this is indeed a full male chorus, recorded acoustically. Technically it is quite amazing for its day -- crisper and fuller than anything Victor had recorded -- and musically it is nicely arranged and competently sung.



Irving A. Oberlander's recording (top of next column) is an example of a single-sided pressing.



The new series was especially popular with colleges and their various musical organizations. Highly prized among collectors are the Personal sides made by various editions of the Princeton Triangle Club Jazz Band between 1924 and 1928.



By the spring of 1924, the label design had become a little more ornate when this special record of "Mansfield, Hail!" was made for Mansfield State Normal School (see top of next page). It was recorded by Columbia artists to promote their song, presumably among alumni. The side illustrated is a piano solo for accompanying singers. Its three verses and choruses are played in a fairly straightforward manner for accompanying singers, and the performer is Columbia's Robert Hood Bowers.

Bowers is a highly interesting figure, and I may write more about him in a future article. He was a composer, arranger, conductor and accompanist



while at Columbia for over a dozen years, and yet little is known of him today.

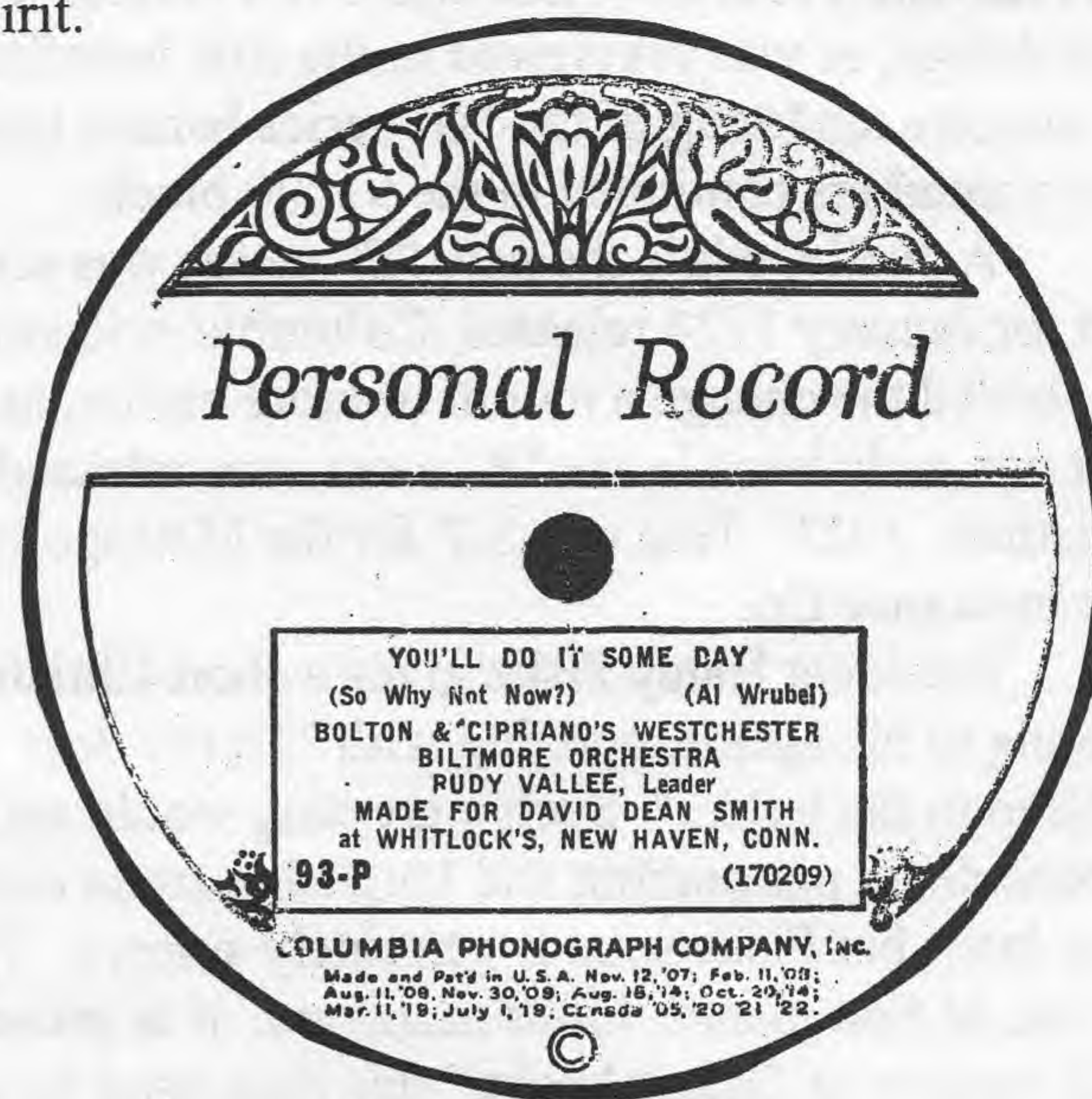
The reverse is the same song, but sung by the Shannon Quartet. Bowers plays the introduction and music between verses, but otherwise it is sung without accompaniment. It is a tribute to the Shannons that they maintain their pitch in between piano interludes.

For those younger readers who may not know the term, "normal schools" were established for training teachers. Mansfield's was not in Ohio (as I had originally thought), but rather in Pennsylvania. It underwent the same evolution as many normal schools: to a state teachers college, to a state college, and finally, in 1983, to Mansfield University. (My own alma mater of Willimantic State Normal School in Connecticut underwent a similar metamorphosis.)

Late in the summer of 1924, Columbia introduced what was to become a myriad of six-digit matrix series for various purposes and classes of music. The most frequently encountered, of course, is the 140000 domestic series, which was used for pop as well as classical 10" masters, both on Columbia and the "Harmony" budget label which came along the following year. For the Personal series, a 170000 block was assigned. An early recording in this new matrix series was by the Binghamton, New York, Kiwanis Quartet, which also made some commercial sides for Columbia about the same time.

The acoustic recording process eventually converted to electrical in 1925; presumably the Personal service made the transformation at the same time. Young Hubert P. Vallée, now an undergraduate at Yale, was back in New York in March of 1926. He had now made the complete transformation to "Rudy"

and was leading a band known as Bolton & Cipriano's Westchester Biltmore Orchestra. Undoubtedly the band was comprised of fellow Yale men, including pianist Joseph Nussbaum. Their tune for 93-P was Rudy's first version of "You'll Do It Some Day (So Why Not Now?)." He would record it again for Edison late in 1927 and again for Harmony early in 1929. The Columbia Personal, however, displays a five or six-piece college band with lots of youthful spirit.



Evidently still hoping to eclipse and replace the great Rudy Wiedoeft, the reverse is a saxophone solo of "Kiss Me Again." It is eloquently played, yet nevertheless boring!

By 1927 the label design had switched to gold print on a black background. The design above the spindle hole became a little more elaborate, while the title and artist portion now appeared virtually the same as the regular "Viva-Tonal" label, but minus the phrase "Electrical Recording."

1927 presents some particularly interesting sides. Record no. 99-P combines a pair of popular songs by The Tunesters: "Ain't She Sweet" and "My Regular Gal." The label suggests a pair of vocal records, but imagine my surprise when I discovered two dandy fox trots, with vocal refrains! The band is highly professional, and this could have passed as a commercial release, had not Columbia already covered the songs by The Radiolites and the Ipana Troubadours respectively. And what of the singer Dick Whiting? Could this be the composer Richard Whiting, who already had an established song-writing career going back over a decade ("Till We Meet Again," "Japanese Sandman," etc.)? His solo on "My Regular Gal" shows a strong yet sensitive ability to balance a vocal refrain against an orchestra.

# You, Too, Can Make a Phonograph Record

This unique plan enables one to preserve, for all time, a record of the actual speaking or singing voice, or any musical accomplishment. It is as easy as it is to speak into the telephone.

We record every kind of Personal Record such as speeches, short sermons, piano, violin, accordion and vocal solos, duets, trios, quartets, jazz orchestras, instrumental trios, instrumental quartets, etc.

The records would be made for you and you in turn could sell them or dispose of them in any way you choose.

Photographs mean much to us but how much more you would value a reproduction of the human voice. Why not make a Personal Record as a cherished gift for your family and friends? This necessitates recording in either our New York or Chicago laboratories.

For complete information address:

**PERSONAL RECORD DEPARTMENT**

**Columbia Phonograph Co., 1819 Broadway, N. Y.**



Within a few days of The Tunesters' two sides, Mr. T. Walter Fred, President of the Humming Bird Hosiery Mills of Chattanooga, Tenn. was recording a "personal message" to his salesgirls around the country. Mr. Fred is obviously uncomfortable speaking into the microphone, as there are several pauses, and his speech is awkward. Clearly a product of the times, T. Walter assures his salesgirls that his mills employ only "white folks, just like you and I, clean-cut, intelligent..."

But what is truly curious is that Mr. Fred says his old friend Bernie Cummins plays music for them on the other side of the record. It is "old music and new music too," the "old music" being "Little Gypsy Sweetheart." However, what Cummins plays is a fine fox trot arrangement of "Sam, the Old Accordion Man"! Evidently Cummins and Fred got their signals crossed, as the two sides were actually recorded six days apart. Cummins would begin recording for Brunswick nearly four months later, and I believe this is his only Columbia recording until two commercial sessions in 1933.



(The ad above is from the 1925 Columbia Catalogue and indicates that records could now be made in Chicago, as well as New York. The phrase "dispose of them in any way you choose" has a slightly ominous connotation!)

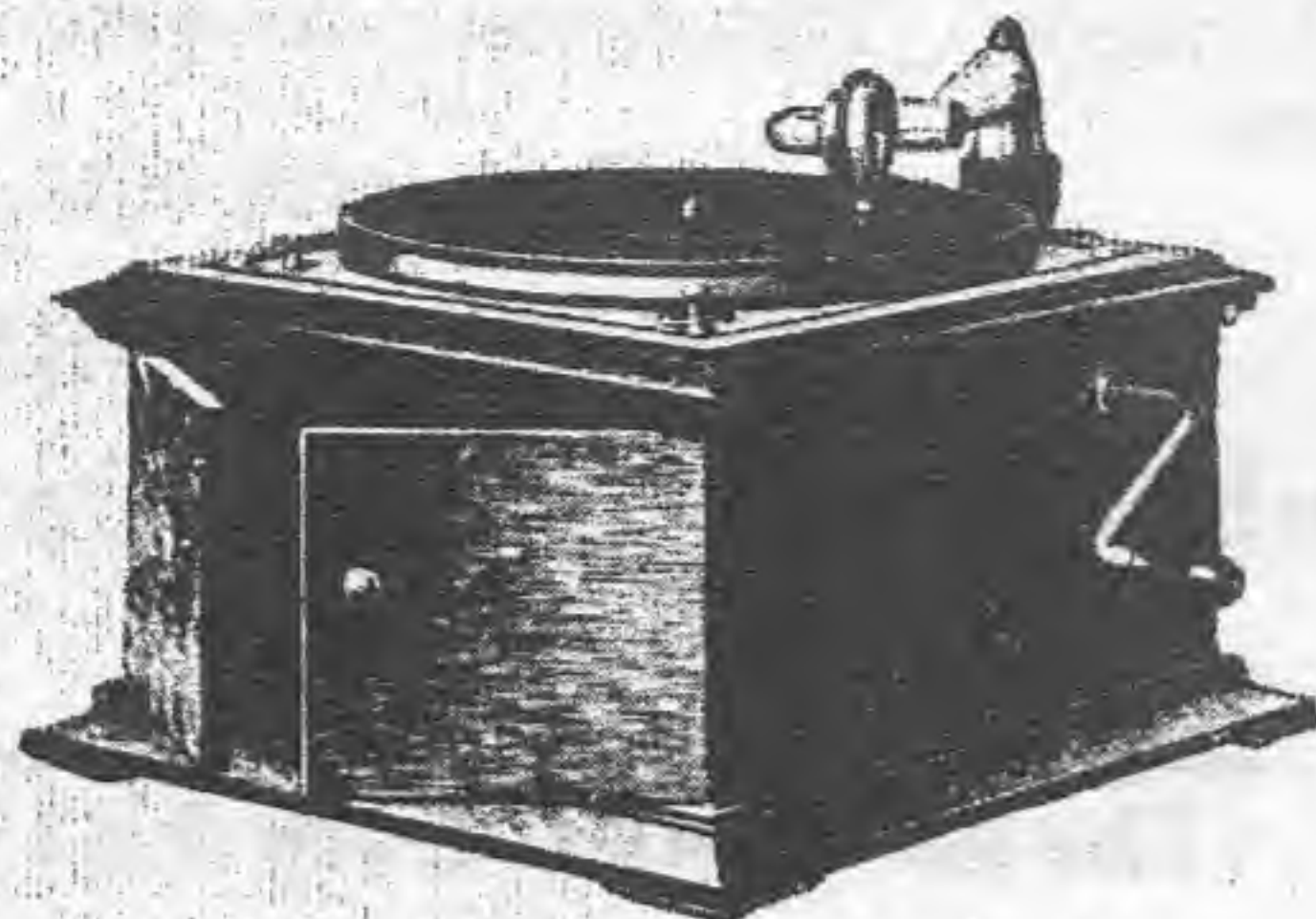
Also in 1927, Edward Avis "Bird Mimic," of Springfield, Mass., recorded a series of bird imitations and opted for a special white label with picture. After the records were delivered, Mr. Avis evidently thought they weren't loud enough (perhaps he was peddling them for school use), so a rubber stamp was made up to advise: "Use Loud-Tone Needle--76 Revolutions per minute."



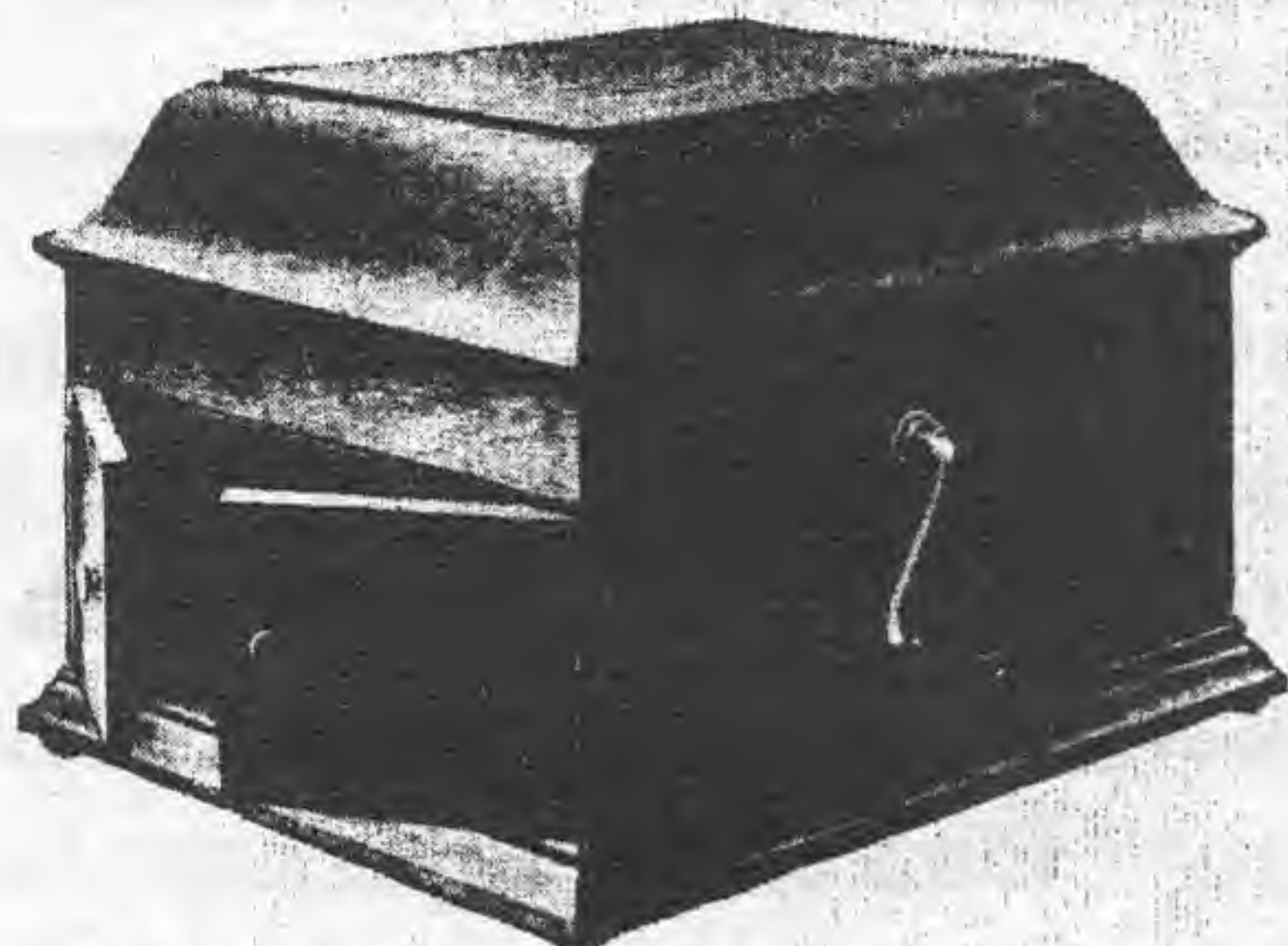
Acoustically-recorded records by Edward Avis had been in the standard Columbia catalogue since 1920, and some were co-released in the educational series. An electric recording was added in 1925 (445-D), and all of Avis's sides were still available in 1929. Most remarkable of all, a sole acoustic educational series record (A3139) was still available in the November, 1934 Columbia catalogue of "Royal Blue" records! All things considered, perhaps Avis thought he could do a better job of



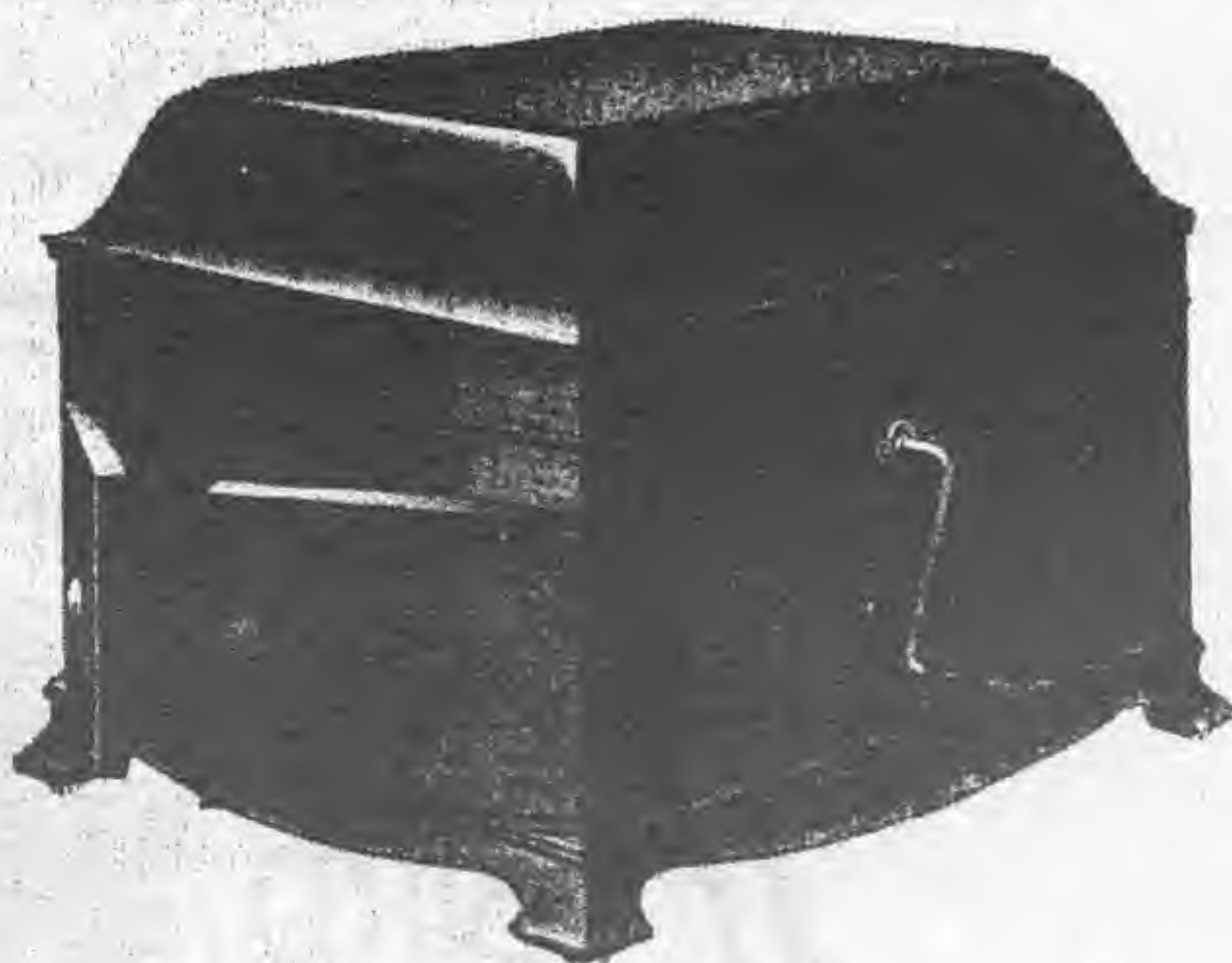
Victrola IV, \$25



Victrola VI, \$35



Victrola VIII, \$50



Victrola IX, \$75



"HIS MASTER'S VOICE"  
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

This trademark and the trademarked word "Victrola" identify all our products. Look under the lid! Look on the label!  
 VICTOR TALKING MACHINE CO.  
 Camden, N. J.

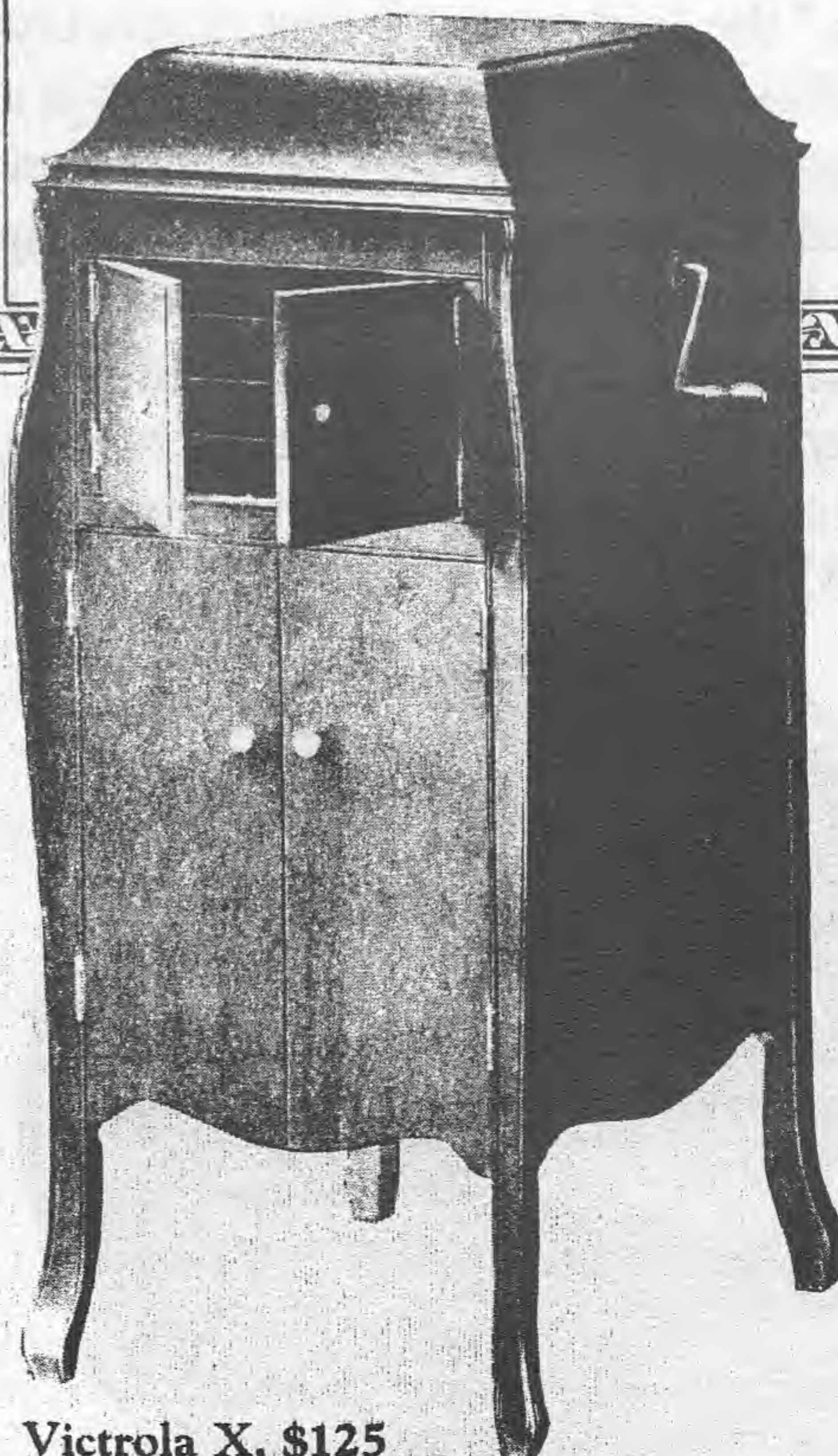
# Which of these Victrolas will you choose?



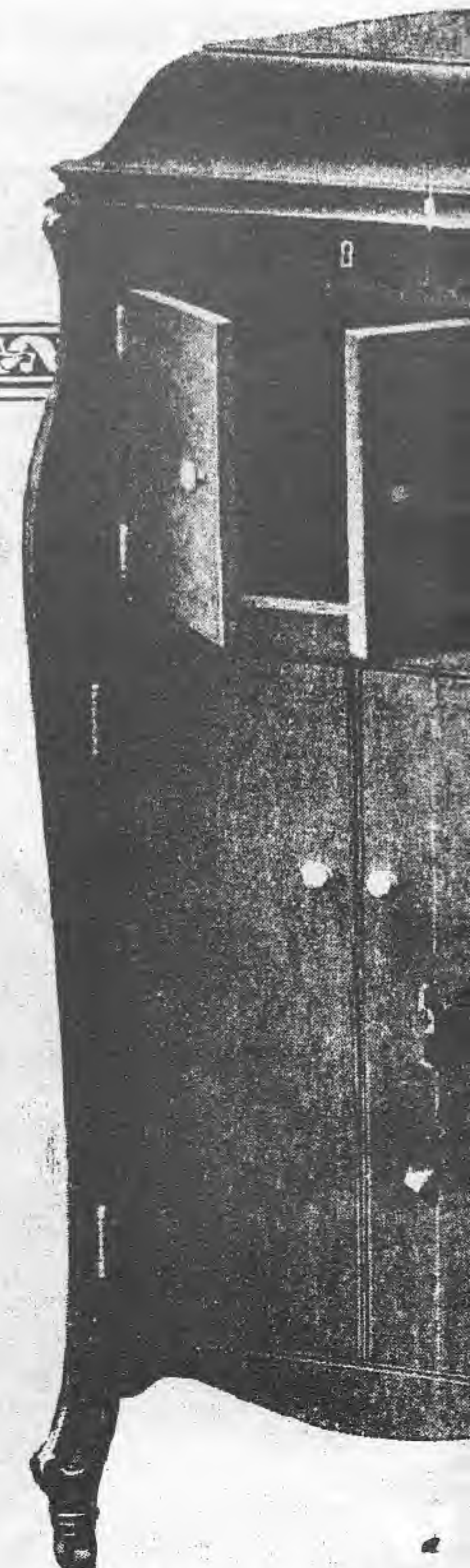
Select whichever style is best suited to your needs and you can be sure it will give the utmost satisfaction. They are all Victrolas, made complete in the Victor factories—the largest plant in the world devoted to the manufacture of musical instrument.

Victrolas differ essentially from all other sound-reproducing instruments. They are built for the express purpose of playing the world's best music exactly as interpreted by the great artists who have naturally chosen the Victor as the medium to record and reproduce their music. The Victor changeable stylus and the modified

## Victor Talking Machine



Victrola X, \$125



Victrola XI, \$150

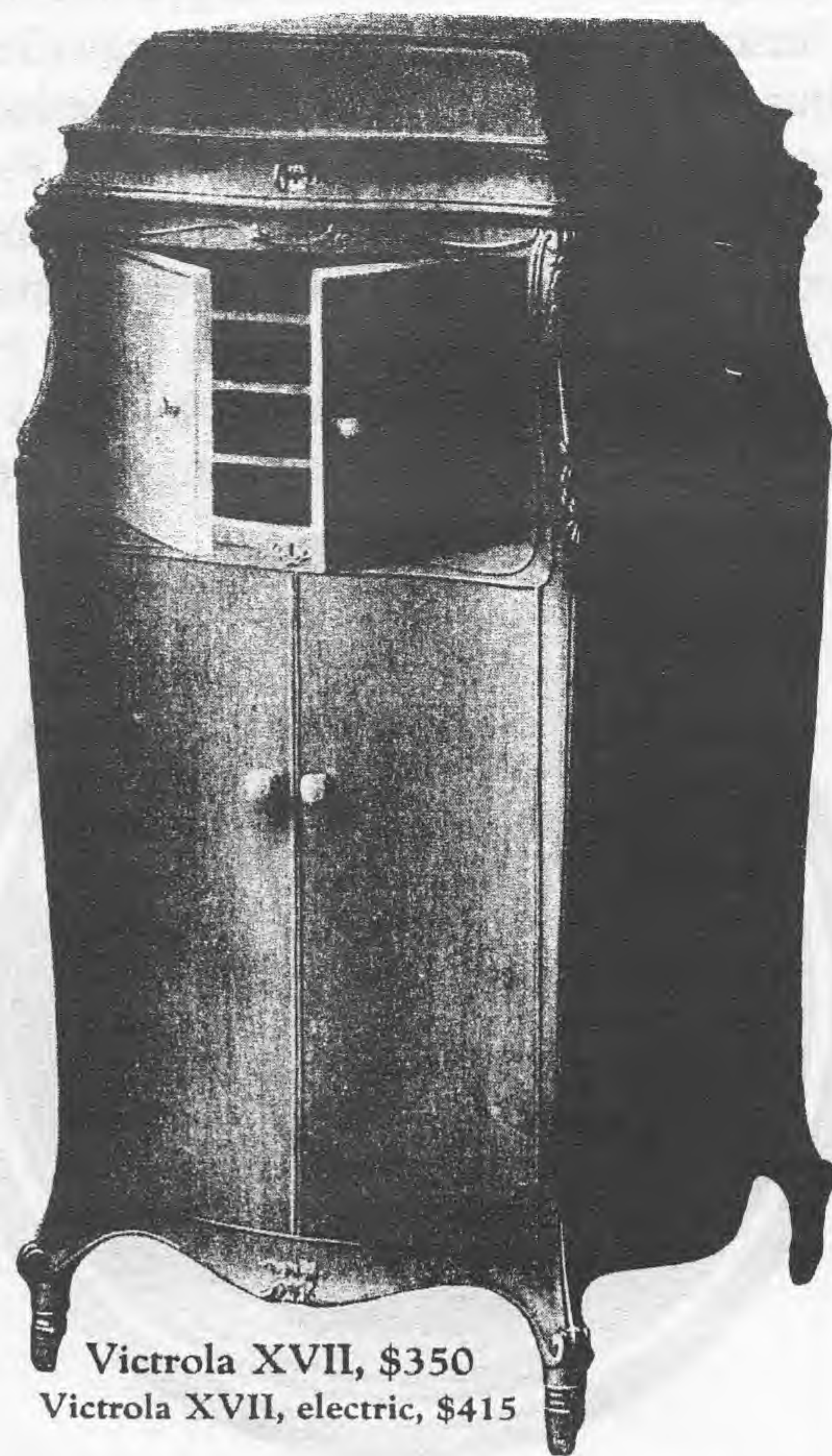
# Victrolas for Christmas?

our doors enable you to adapt the volume of tone to the acoustic requirements of any room, but no compromise is permitted, and on the Victrola no distortion is possible.

These are only two of the many Victor patented features in every Victrola, and the more than twenty years' research and experience in the art of sound reproduction are your guarantee of absolute satisfaction.

To be sure you get Victor products, look for our famous trademark "His Master's Voice"—under the lid of all instruments, on the labels of all records.

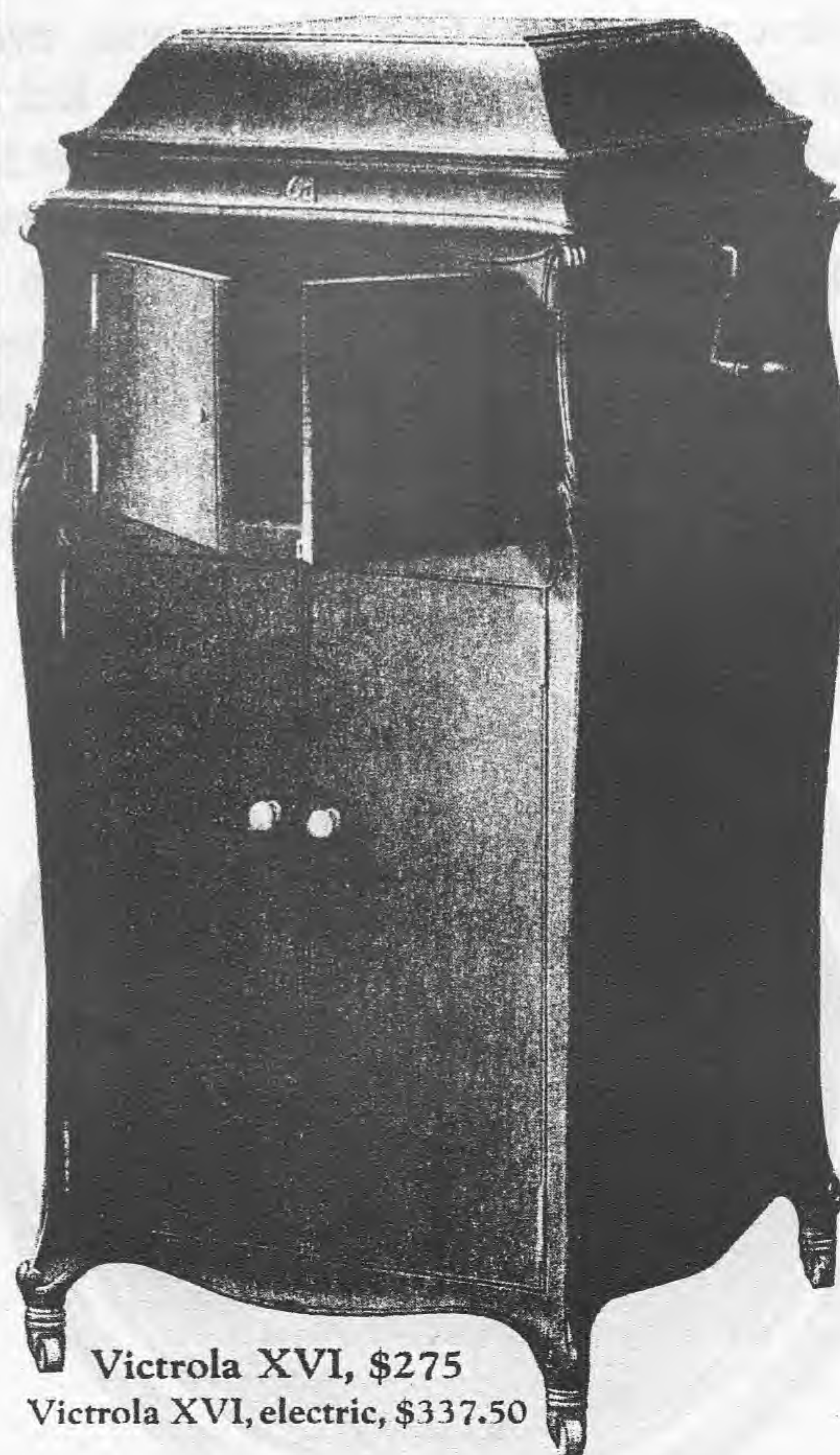
Victrola Company, Camden, N. J.



Victrola XVII, \$350  
Victrola XVII, electric, \$415



Victrola XIV, \$225



Victrola XVI, \$275  
Victrola XVI, electric, \$337.50

selling his bird records than Columbia; perhaps he was right, as I have seen duplicates.

Religious topics continued to provide fodder for the Personal label, as did aspiring songwriters. One Julius Schmidt had a raft of songs recorded, including a silly and insipid "New Hymn for President Hoover," early in 1929 before the inauguration. Later compositions, such as "Poet's Dream," state: "Composed in Venice / Sung by Emile Cote / Piano Acc. Grete Rauch / Music and Words by Julius Schmidt." Thankfully, none of his songs hit the big time.



I have no idea who Olga Warren was; even an Internet search reveals nothing about her. But she had a wonderful mezzo-soprano voice, and must have had a promising career, as well as a generous benefactor. She recorded some sides for Columbia in 1929, which not only received a specially designed label on a green background, but the sides had full orchestra accompaniment. On at least two sides she sang duets with Frederick Warren -- husband? Brother? Father?



Now comes a mystery to me: the Majestic Electric Phono-Radio Records. (Little did Columbia anticipate that in a few years Majestic Radio would actually *OWN* them for a brief period!) On the surface, one would assume that the records were produced in order to demonstrate the Majestic Phono-Radio combination -- but why piano recordings of just the lower part of a piano duet?? Would some upscale music store demonstrate a piano along with the electrical instrument? This is hardly likely, as Madame Ryder is an especially skilled and adroit pianist; her "Slavonic Dance" almost defies a "Primo" partner, other than by a near professional!



My next example is a disc which must rarely turn up in this country. Indeed, while it was recorded in New York by the Columbia Symphony Orchestra, with the aid of Louis A. Witten announcing, and given a regular P-series number, it was intended for Canada only. In fact, my copy was pressed in the Toronto plant, as I assume were all others.

As demonstration records go, this is pretty



David Dean Smith produced and sold many of the Yale-related Personal recordings. The letter on this page was in response to a specific query about the record detailed on the next page.

2040 Lee Road,  
Orlando, Florida.  
Dec. 28, 1954.

Mr. Fred Miller,  
76 Treno Street,  
New Rochelle, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Miller;

Answering your letter of December 5th. The record of Carl Webster's Yale Collegians, was the first record I made. Also it was the first and of two records made by the Yale Collegians. The second one contained the selection "You'll Do it Some Day, Why not Now" a number that had a very catchy tune and we sold it by mail to many of the Boys' and Girls' schools throughout the East as well as at Yale. Rudy Valle plays the Sax and it was Rudy's first recording, together with the record Dream Child and If I'm Without You. The recording was made by Victor on their Personal Label recordings at their Studio in New York, I believe in the Spring of 1926 or 1927. Rudy Valle could probably tell you who the other musicians were. One of them was from West Haven and I think that Syl Loro was the Guitar player. Syl Loro's address is 67 Janicke Lane, New Haven, Conn. My recollection of Carl Webster is that he was the leader and I believe he did some writing of music too at that time. The name Whitlock in connection is of no importance, it was simply the address of my Music Department. I rented space from the concern, a leased department as you would know it.

Unfortunately I do not have a copy left of the recordings and I have been ask about them very many times in the last twenty five years. I made the first record that Lanny Ross sung for a few years later and I do not have any records left of it.

I hope that this information will be of some value to you and with best wishes for a wonderful year for 1955, I am,

Yours very truly,

*David Dean Smith*

David Dean Smith

routine, and it is highly reminiscent of the old Columbia Double-Disc demonstration record of a generation earlier. Entitled "Fidelity," side 1 opens with an abbreviated but spirited Act 3 Prelude to Lohengrin, which highly emphasizes the bass notes. The speaker talks about the wonderful tonal qualities of the De Forest Crosley radio, and there are individual musical excerpts to illustrate them. He also talks about the instrument's ability at pulling in long-distant stations, "because of long distances from broadcasting stations and widely varying atmospheric conditions." The announcer emphasizes that the De Forest Crosley is made in Canada by an all-Canadian company, and side 2 ends with a stirring chorus of "Oh, Canada." I used to think that these excerpts were dubs, but this is clearly not so. Perhaps our Robert Hood Bowers was even waving the baton.

1930 was barely two days old when Carl Webster's Yale Collegians were in the New York studio to record "Dream Child" and "If I'm Without You" for 139-P. The two tunes are spirited, melodic and well-played but, unfortunately, they were composed by the bandsmen and destined to go nowhere. So who was this group?



Well, two generations ago the collector who originally owned my copy began to speculate. Rudy Vallée? He had few references, so he began writing letters. He was able to locate David Dean Smith, by then in retirement in Florida. Mr. Smith's recollections were somewhat vague (he didn't even spell Rudy Vallée's name correctly), and his information about the Vallée recordings was incorrect. In fact, he had even forgotten that Columbia (*and not Victor*) had made these recordings! But a man in retirement can be forgiven....his letter does reveal a little on how

the Yale recordings, including Vallée's earlier Yale sides, were distributed. (See letter on previous page.)

But what of this recording? Vallée was an established Victor recording artist, with about four dozen sides under his belt, when the Carl Webster recording was made. Mr. Miller persisted. A little more than two years went by when a letter came from RV himself. Not only did he deny making it, he claimed no knowledge of Carl Webster!

*Rudy Vallée*

7430 PYRAMID PLACE  
HOLLYWOOD 46, CALIFORNIA

March 19, 1957

Mr. Fred H. Miller  
Manchester Depot  
Vermont

Dear Mr. Miller:

In reply to your letter of March 14th, no I didn't do DREAM GIRL or IF I'M WITHOUT YOU. The boys listed in your letter did make some records with me that were sold by David Dean Smith.

Syl Loro was not the guitar player but Royce Sloane was. Cliff Burwell did not play piano. We used a boy from West Haven.

Sorry, I don't know Carl Webster. I'd be happy to receive a copy of the record. Hope this information is of some assistance to you.

Cordially,

*Rudy Vallée*

In reality, Vallée had graduated from Yale and was off on his own career, as were many of his bandsmen. This new group featured a trumpeter and vocalist named Stew Pletcher, who had a fuller voice and "jazzier" style than Vallée's. The group was recalled to make a few more sides two months later for Okeh, and again, with a slightly different personnel, in November. Carl Webster evidently disappeared from the music scene (maybe he left music to become a lawyer or a businessman), but Pletcher turns up on records for a few more years -- most notably with Red Norvo and some sides with Norvo and Mildred Bailey. His 1978 obituary states that he "freelanced in the Los Angeles area for a number of years, [and] he retired from the music business in 1965."

The P-series apparently ended its life in 1930 with a series of fraternity songs by the Psi Upsilon

Quartette (143-P through 148-P). Whilst the songs are of rather ordinary fare, two of the singers are not, for they include John Barnes Wells and Reinald Werrenrath--two names who were almost exclusively associated with Victor and, to my knowledge, never with Columbia.



The last issues of the 10" P-series reflect the smaller diameter labels Columbia began using in 1930.

Actually, the "P" series saga does not end here. There was also a 12" equivalent, but perhaps due to cost, there were few takers. Instead of being assigned one of the new six-digit matrix blocks in 1924, the 12" series continued to use the 91000 block, which surely must have been as confusing for pressmen in the 1920s as it is for researchers today. Mirroring the domestic releases (50000-D), these were numbered in a 50000-P series. The only one in the series I have encountered is another pairing by Olga Warren, using the same special green and gold label design as the 10". There were less than fifty different issues in the 12" P series, including some for business use, such as the "Kellogg Radio Demonstration Record" (50031-P) and "Showroom Conduct" (50022-P).

There was yet another 10-inch "P" series, concurrent with the vanity series. These appeared in a 1000-P block and were issued largely in collaboration with movie and stage musicals--although not exclusively, as with some "Uncle Don's Radio Club" issues. Label designs are quite varied, but these seem to all duplicate commercial issues from Columbia's subsidiary Harmony label. Consequently, they do not qualify as true "personal" recordings, even though they were pressed for specific clients. A few examples are shown in the next column.



This installment has dealt principally with those personal recordings given a "P" catalogue number, but by no means do they cover the entire output from Columbia in this vein. The next chapter will touch on several different bases. It will not be as comprehensive, but it will illustrate a wide variety of recordings and labels Columbia produced which, in one way or another, could be considered "Personals."

For additional Columbia Personal Record illustrations, as well as dozens of other labels, send for **Note the Notes: An Illustrated History of the Columbia 78 RPM Label**. 64 pages, soft cover. Published at \$15.95, our price: \$14.45 + 1.45 S&H.

*The New Amberola Phonograph Co.*

## ~In Review~

### *Items of Interest Reviewed by the 'Graphic' Editor*

A little-known centennial of 2003 was the Broadway arrival of the **first** "Wizard of Oz" at the Majestic Theater, January 21, 1903. Its history is fascinating.

L. Frank Baum's original children's book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, was such a success that a year after it first appeared (in 1900), Baum began work on a musical adaptation. He collaborated with Paul Tietjens, who provided melodies for Baum's lyrics. Their work was evidently very straightforward, whereas the producer and director wanted more of a spoof of traditional musical productions. The result was that some Baum-Tietjens numbers remained, while others were current popular songs which were interpolated into the show throughout its run.

And what a run it had...nine months on Broadway, then tours, with frequent returns to New York. In fact, the "Oz" company performed for about eight years! As a result, songs came and went throughout its life. Songs which were all the rage in 1903 and 1904 ("That's Where She Sits All Day," "Hurrah for Baffin's Bay") were considered passé a few years later, so new songs were substituted (such as "Budweiser's a Friend of Mine" in 1908 or "Can't You See I'm Lonely" in 1905). Two of the show's leading stars were David Montgomery as the Tin Woodman, and Fred Stone as the Scarecrow. Regrettably, Montgomery and Stone did not record for Victor until 1911, and no titles from "Oz" were released.

Devotees of the 1939 Judy Garland film version would probably shake their heads in disbelief at how different the original production was. For starters, the tornado takes Dorothy and her pet calf "Imogene" to Oz! Then there's the streetcar conductor and his girlfriend ("Tryxie Tryfle") who are blown in the same storm. There's a lovelorn poet, poisonous poppies – you get the idea. Perhaps the 1925 silent movie version retained some of these early components.

Enter David Maxine. If ever there was a fanatic dedicated to the thorough study of a single subject, it's Maxine! What has resulted for the show's centenary is a deluxe 2-CD set of extant contemporary recordings related to the original production.

There are over thirty on the first disc by artists such as Bob Roberts, Harry Tally, Dan Quinn, Pryor's Band, Morgan and Stanley—keep in mind that there were no original cast recordings made—from contemporary companies such as Victor, Edison, Columbia, and even Leeds and Lambert.

"But that's not all!" as the exuberant infomercial salesman would say. You also get music box discs, piano rolls [how **did** Maxine locate that "Oz" medley roll marked "Property of L. Frank Baum" on the end of its box??], as well as songs from two subsequent "Oz" productions. There are also a few recordings by the show's stars, Bessie Wynne and Montgomery & Stone, to illustrate their singing styles. Then there are bonus tracks from the 1903 production – kind of an encore, if you will. The set ends with an obscure recording of "Father Goose Songs" taken from Baum's 1901 book, *Songs of Father Goose*. Although I have lost track of the total number of cuts, there's a total of nearly two and a half hours' worth of music.

The transfers are quite good throughout, though I found myself wondering if a couple of them might be a tad too fast. Musically speaking, the Baum-Tietjens compositions are remarkably forgettable, although I am starting to warm up to some of them. The "Phantom Patrol" appears on a couple of the piano rolls and, played in a minor key, has a marvelously spooky melody.

The set comes with two 32-page booklets, profusely illustrated and with full color covers. There's information about the show's history, detailed annotations for most of the recordings, pictures of many original performers; and for those who have difficulty understanding all the word of century-old recordings, the second booklet prints all the lyrics.

All in all, this is an outstanding production, and I congratulate David Maxine for a job well done. Once you own this set, you will surely agree that he has transformed his passion for Oz into something which will give years of enjoyment. Congratulations are also in order for this set receiving a nomination for the upcoming 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Grammy Awards!

Ordering information can be obtained from Hungry Tiger Press, 5995 Dandridge Lane, Suite 121, San Diego, CA 92115-6575; 'Phone: (619) 582-5106. Or visit their fun website at:

[www.hungrytigerpress.com](http://www.hungrytigerpress.com)



# Benny Carter, 95, Musician and Arranger

Benny Carter, whose combination of highly developed talents as composer, arranger, bandleader and soloist on a variety of instruments was unmatched in the jazz world, died Saturday at a hospital in Los Angeles. He was 95.

## A Versatile Master

By JOHN S. WILSON

Benny Carter's career was remarkable for both its length and its consistently high musical achievement, from his first recordings in the 1920's to his youthful-sounding improvisations in the 1990's. His pure-toned, impeccably phrased performances made him one of the two pre-eminent alto saxophonists in jazz, with Johnny Hodges, from the late 1920's until the arrival of Charlie Parker in the mid-1940's. He was also an accomplished soloist on trumpet and clarinet, and on occasion he played piano, trombone and both tenor and baritone saxophones.

He helped to lay the foundation for the swing era of the late 1930's and early 40's with arrangements he had written a decade earlier for his own big band and the orchestras of Fletcher Henderson and Chick Webb, as well as for Benny Goodman before Goodman was acclaimed as the King of Swing. He later contributed arrangements and compositions to Glenn Miller and Count Basie.

From 1929 to 1946, Mr. Carter led big bands sparkling with young talent. His band in the early 1930's included the pianist Teddy Wilson, the saxophonist Chu Berry, the trombonist J. C. Higginbotham and the drummer Sid Catlett. A decade later, his contingent of future jazz stars included the trombonists J. J. Johnson and Al Grey, the trumpeter Miles Davis and the drummer Max Roach.

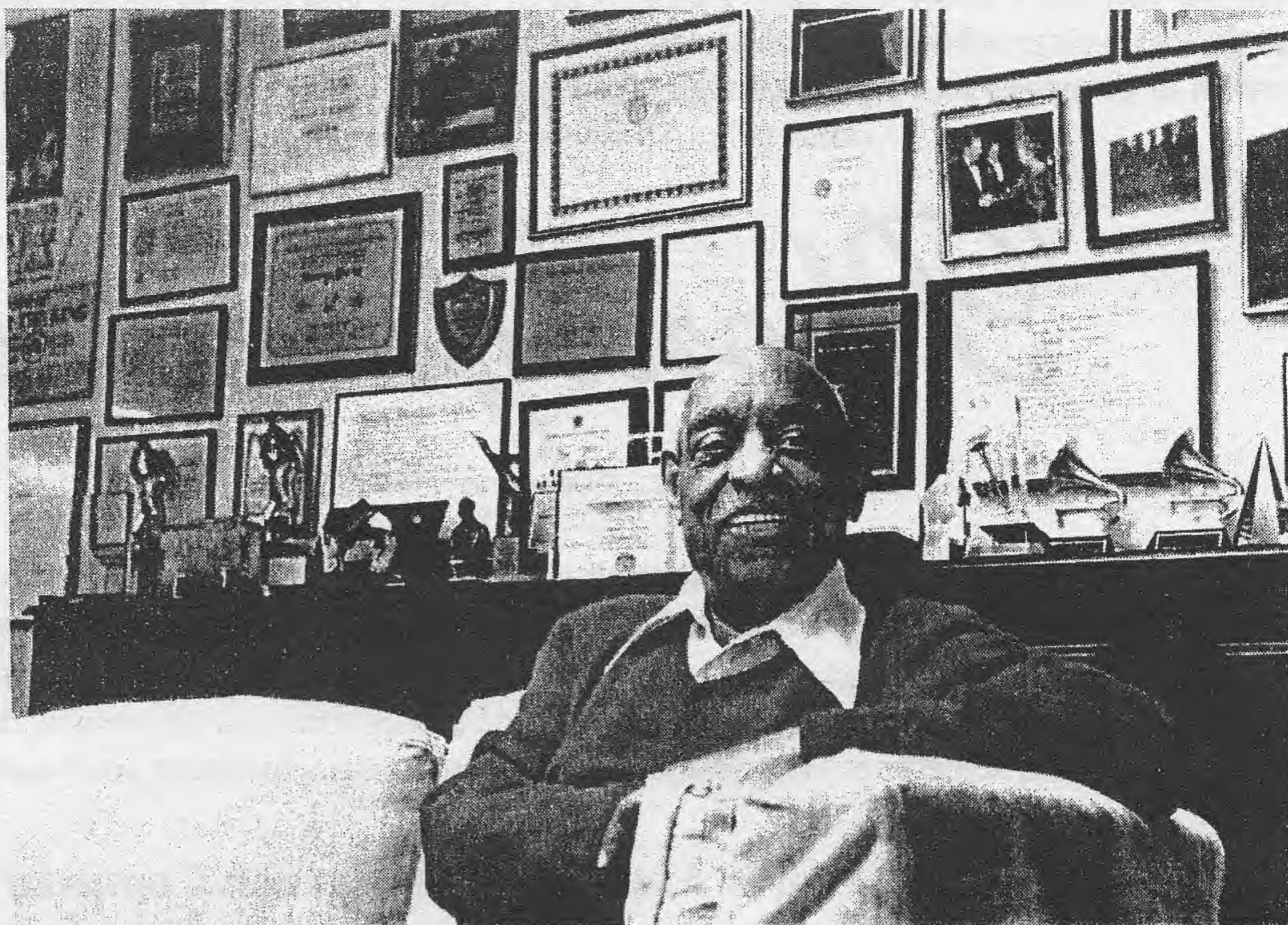
His compositions included "Blues in My Heart," "When Lights Are Low," "Blue Star," "Lonesome Nights," "Doozy" and "Symphony in Riffs." Beginning in the early 1940's, he composed and orchestrated music for films, and from the late 50's he also composed for television.

In 1962, when Mr. Carter was only 54, the critic Whitney Balliett wrote in *The New Yorker* that "few of his contemporaries continue to play or arrange or compose as well as he does, and none of them plays as many instruments and arranges and composes with such aplomb."

"Carter, indeed, belongs to that select circle of pure-jazz musicians who tend to represent the best of their times," the piece continued.

His public fame did not always match his accomplishments, and his only major hit of the big band era was "Cow-Cow Boogie," a novelty tune sung by Ella Mae Morse. However, early in his career his fellow musicians nicknamed him simply the King, and among them he was held in universally high regard.

The trumpeter Doc Cheatham recalled that "we broke our backs to get into Benny's band" because musicians learned so much from performing with him. Sy Oliver, whose brilliant arrangements gave the Jimmie Lunceford orchestra of the 1930's and the Tommy Dorsey band of the 1940's their distinctive cachet,



Ed Berger

said Mr. Carter was "the most complete professional musician I've ever known."

And John Hammond, the record producer who nurtured the careers of Count Basie, Billie Holiday and Benny Goodman, said Mr. Carter was "one of the great influences in American music, one of its unsung heroes."

Mr. Carter was not widely known to the jazz public until his emergence, in his 70's, as an acclaimed elder statesman. His lack of public

around the corner.

When he was 13, he bought a trumpet at a pawnshop, but when he was unable to play it after a weekend of effort he traded it in for a saxophone.

By the time he was 15, he was sitting in with bands in Harlem. He got his first full-time job when he was 19, with Charlie Johnson's band at Smalls' Paradise in Harlem.

When he made his first records in 1928, with the Johnson band, the session included two of his own arrangements.

Also in 1928, he joined a band led by Fletcher Henderson's brother, Horace, and shortly after, when the leader walked out during a tour, the abandoned musicians elected Mr. Carter to replace him. He was 21 years old. For the next two decades, as his biographer, Morroe Berger, wrote, "he was either leading a band or regrettably disbanding one while looking forward to organizing another one."

In 1935, Mr. Carter went to Paris to join the Willie Lewis Orchestra at the club Chez Florence. He remained in Europe for three years, playing mostly in France, Denmark and the Netherlands. He also spent 10 months in England as an arranger for the British Broadcasting Corporation dance orchestra.

On his return to the United States in 1938, Mr. Carter formed another big band, which played at the Savoy Ballroom for two years. After that band broke up, Mr. Carter led a small group on 52nd Street while he wrote arrangements for the radio show "Your Hit Parade" and prepared still another band. He then headed toward the West Coast on tour and settled in Hollywood.

He began his association with films in 1943 with "Stormy Weather," for which he wrote arrangements and played on the soundtrack but received no screen credit.

From 1946 until 1970, he was virtually out of the public eye. Aside from a few tours with the all-star Jazz at the Philharmonic troupe in the 1950's, he stayed behind the scenes as a composer, arranger and occasional instrumentalist in films and, starting in 1959, in television.

In Hollywood, he was one of the first black arrangers to break the color barrier, working on top television series like "M Squad." He also arranged music for almost every major singer of the day, including Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Lou Rawls, Ray Charles, Peggy Lee, Louis Armstrong, Pearl Bailey, Billy Eckstine and Mel Tormé.



recognition was sometimes attributed to the fact that his bearing was reserved and dignified, that he was not a flamboyant showman. Moreover, as the drummer J. C. Heard suggested, "his music was a little too refined" for the 1930's and 40's, when he was leading a big band.

Bennett Lester Carter was born on Aug. 8, 1907, the youngest of three children and the only boy. He was reared in a neighborhood called San Juan Hill, then one of the roughest areas in Manhattan, near what is now Lincoln Center.

When he was a youngster, his musical idols were trumpeters — his cousin Theodore (Cuban) Bennett, who never recorded but whose advanced musical ideas were attested to by many musicians, and Bubber Miley, a star of Duke Ellington's orchestra in the late 1920's who lived



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